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BARNES

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DISCOURSE

ON THE

Death of President Abraham Lincoln,

DELIVERED BY

REV. SAMUEL BARNES,

IN THE

MONUMENT STREET METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

ON THE

Day appointed by the Municipal Authorities,

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1865.

Published by request of the Leaders' Meeting.

BALTIMORE:
PRINTED BY JOHN D. TOY.

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S E R M O N .

THE VICTORY WAS TURNED, THAT DAY, INTO MOURNING.

2d Samuel, 12 chap. 2 v.

OUR presence in this house of God to-day, is occasioned by no ordinary occurrence. At this hour, in the Capital of our Nation, the mortal remains of ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the nation's recently re-elected and *most* loved President, are receiving their funeral obsequies. At this hour, not only in the National Metropolis, and at the Executive Mansion, but throughout all the land, there is lamentation and great mourning,—such mourning as, up this time in the nation's history, has not been known, and, such as, I doubt not, to the end of its history, will not be known again. Never before, has this house of God been draped as you see it draped to-day. Never before, has your own residence been draped as it is to-day:—on every side—every where throughout the land—in the city full, and in the country wide, the weeds of mourning float out expressions of sad wailing on every passing breeze. Nor are these badges *meaningless* to-day. Never before has crape had more *expression*, or been a truer exponent of the heart's bitterness. Walking upon the streets to-day—or, contemplating the appearance of our whole land, draped, as, at this hour it is, in mourning, one is forcibly reminded of Egypt, when in every house there was one newly slain. *There* it was a son, a daughter, a sister, or a brother,—*here* it is our *Father*; more, it is *our Country's Saviour*, whose death, by violent and wicked hands we mourn. Surely “an enemy hath done this.” And, though the immediate agent of this foul crime is found in the person of an insignificant tragedian, its *spirit* is the same as that which

organized, and, with such terrible slaughter, has, for four years, carried on resistance to the God-ordained "powers that be," in our land.

My hearers, I wonder not at this consummation. I had expected it long ago. Nor, but for the dawns of returning peace, had I been taken by surprise at its announcement. Long ago, authorized rebel journals advertised a price upon the head of the Nation's Executive, even as eighteen hundred years ago, the Jews placed a price upon the head of the World's Redeemer. And, alas! in each case a *Judas* was found vile enough to perform the dreadful deed. But to whom, after all, are we to charge the betrayal of our Lord? To Judas, certainly, as the *agent*, but, primarily, to the *Jews*, his Master. And upon whom are we to charge the murder of the nation's twice chosen President, *but upon that same spirit of rebellion*, which at first incited, and has ever since *carried on, encouraged, and sympathized with*, treason and rebellion.

Let us look a moment at the *causelessness* of the wicked act, whose sad results we mourn to-day.

MR. LINCOLN was no man's personal enemy. So *honest* was he, that no man's personal rights could suffer at his hand. So kind and generous was he, that no man's feelings could be wounded by his ever-guarded and innocent words. As President of the United States, he but carried out the will of the majority, who by constitutional process, the second time had placed him in power. And, what American, worthy of the name, would deny to the majority, according to the genius of our government, the right to rule. MR. LINCOLN, in the place he filled, could not do otherwise than enforce their will. To this, he was bound by his oath and obligations of office, according to the Constitution of our land—an instrument, in the forming of which, both Southern and Northern men bore their equal part. But, not *only* by his oath of office was he compelled to enforce the laws, *even with the sword*, but he was so compelled *by the teachings of the Word of God*, as well. Hear the utterance of St. Paul, (Rom. 13, 4,) upon this subject. Speaking of the *legitimate*

national ruler, he says, "if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

So that, *in enforcing the law with the sword*, he was doing, not only what *his sworn Constitutional obligations compelled him to do*, but was *performing a duty specifically enjoined upon him by the Word of God*.

Again, who else, in executing the law, could have done so with greater mildness and personal good will. Never, in the knowledge of any one, did he utter a word or write a syllable, expressive of personal passion or vindictiveness toward any, even the worst, in rebellion against the laws. Both his acts, his words, and even his spirit toward the insurgents, were those of an affectionate father toward a wayward child.

What cause, therefore, for his brutal murder? He was but the kind and considerate servant of the Constitutional majority of our citizens, whose province it is, by the very genius of our institutions to rule. In enforcing law too, under such circumstances, he was but obeying a Divine behest. Has not ABRAHAM LINCOLN fallen, therefore, an innocent victim to his fidelity to both human and Divine law?

The *baseness*, moreover, of this *causeless* act is enhanced by its manifest *uselessness*.

Had it been possible, by striking down the innocent and faithful *servant* of the people, to strike down with him *the people's cause*, the case would be different. But surely none knew better than the insurgents themselves, that the death of Abraham Lincoln could not be, and *would* not be, the nation's death.

In some forms of monarchical government the assassination of the nation's head would almost necessarily be followed by revolution and the introduction of a new order of things. But, thank God, not so here. The nation loved, loves now, and ever will love the memory of Abraham Lincoln; but none can be better aware than rebels themselves, that the American nation depends for its life and

continuance upon no *one* man. ABRAHAM LINCOLN is dead. But, scarcely was he upon his cooling-board, till by the admirable and inimitable provisions of our Constitution, another, and one perhaps not less able than he, was in his place, and the governmental machinery, with only such a jar as settled its parts together more firmly and indissolubly, was moving on with no less power than before, and *more* formidably to traitors than ever.

Yes, ABRAHAM LINCOLN is dead. But *the nation lives*. The same dispatches which shall announce to other lands the sad intelligence that our chosen ruler is no more, will announce as well, the fact, that another hand, not less strong, and far *more stern*, now holds the helm of the ship of State. That now, more than ever before, have both secessionists at home, and their helping sympathizers abroad, reason to fear the awards of avenging justice.

In addition therefore, to the *causelessness* of this foul deed, how utterly *useless* it is—how *far worse* than useless to our country's foes. And, though a dozen successive assassinations, of those successively appointed to fill the Presidential chair should take place, still would *the nation* live, and so would its *loyal* people. But perhaps its *loyal* people only. For much—very much of the spirit of conciliation and toleration, existing a week ago, may be looked for, even now, in vain.

The spirit of rebellion, therefore, which has both sought the nation's life and slain the nation's head, is one of causeless, useless, wanton wickedness and cruelty. Nor, is this its *first* and *only* manifestation. Four years ago to-day, in the streets of our own City, it shed the first blood of the rebellion without the slightest provocation whatsoever. Since then it has manifested itself, not only in *causeless*, *malignant* and *most bloody* efforts, to overthrow the best of all earthly governments, but by the *more than savage*, even *brutal* murder and massacre of helpless prisoners, regularly surrendered, as at Forts Pillow on the Mississippi and Plymouth in North Carolina. And if this were not enough, witness its *systematic* and *literal*, and to make it still worse, *gradual*

starvation of thousands of *other prisoners* in their hands, as at Richmond and Belle Island, and Salisbury and Andersonville; and last, though not least, the brutal hunting down, by blood hounds, of unwilling conscripts, whom they have either thus torn to pieces, or shot down in their tracks, or forced to take up arms against the government they had sworn to maintain, and which they loved as they loved their own lives. Such wanton, cruel wickedness, we look for elsewhere, in the history of the civilized world, in vain. Who can fail to recognize in it from first to last the unfailing marks of St. John's apocalyptic "beast."

I would not be understood as charging upon those, who being truly and honestly loyal, have simply objected to the propriety of some of the measures adopted by the late Executive, for the putting down of the rebellion, as being possessed by this spirit. Nor would I regard as guilty of its possession, those who, having friends in the South, have simply not lost their sympathy or regard for those friends, *as such*; but I *do* regard as guilty of the same spirit that has done all this, all those who would rejoice in the success of the wicked efforts, made by traitors, to overthrow this Government.

My hearers, no *greater* sin is named in all God's Word, than resistance to "the powers that be." The reason is assigned by the Apostle in the following language, "For he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." Mark the phrase, "*the ordinance of God.*" Does not this signify that God puts his seal upon and stamps, and thus ratifies and adopts, as his own, the governments of men, whatever their form or provisions, only so they come not in competition with sound morality? It is true, that in his word, he no where designates as best, any *one* form of human government. As to this, nations are left to their own selections, even as are men and women in forming matrimonial alliances. But, as, when formally solemnized, the originally voluntary matrimonial alliance, becomes by divine ratification and authority religiously binding, insomuch that he who now breaks away from its claims, is guilty before

God of a heinous sin, even so, and precisely so, is it with human governments when once voluntarily devised, and then duly signed and sealed. Now, as with matrimony, it is an ordinance of God; and St. Paul declares, the penalty of its violation, when he further declares, "*he that resisteth shall receive unto himself damnation.*"

Few of us, perhaps none of us, comprehend fully the *awfulness* of the sin of rebellion. What has it done in our own land. But for it our Southern soil had not been, as now, almost literally soaked, from one end to the other, with human gore. But for it how many *hundred thousands* of families, North and South, now broken, bleeding, mourning, ruined, with substance and even subsistence gone: with husbands and brothers slain, had to-day been unbroken, prosperous and happy as in years and times now forever past. But why attempt to enumerate the woes rebellion has brought upon our land. God only knows them, and eternity only can reveal them. As to its results or effects therefore, I will only further add, and you may regard *this* according to your own minds, as either a blessing or an additional curse, that but for this wicked rebellion now so nearly crushed, *slavery*, once the cherished idol of the South, had still remained unharmed, and with all its formerly commanding power.

I can assure you, my hearers, it is no pleasure for me to stand up here to-day, and rehearse in your hearing the divinely written denunciations of the sin of rebellion. Nor is it any pleasure for me to call up anew, either to my own mind or yours, *the unspeakable horrors* in all our land, which secession and rebellion have so uselessly produced; and yet this solemn occasion suggests and seems to demand it. Moreover, as a minister I must be faithful with my people, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear to hear.

Such, therefore, is the *crime*, and such the wickedness of the spirit of the rebellion, whose sad practical results our nation specially mourns to-day in the ruthless murder of her Chief Executive.

In conclusion. What are *the duties*, and what *the lessons* of the hour. As to the duties:

1. Let all those who have hitherto, in any manner or degree sympathized with, or aided the rebellion, now stop and calmly review this whole subject. Ask yourselves, in the sight of God, in the light of His word, in the light, especially of His providential teachings, as now so clearly read in the history of the past four years; and finally, ask yourselves, in the light of the foul murder of our great, and good, and generous President, have I not been mistaken in giving to the rebellion any, even the least of my sympathy, aid or countenance. And if upon such calm review, you see yourselves to have been wrong, repent heartily before God, and forever renounce a cause which bears upon it the brand of both human and divine condemnation. As to duty:

2ndly. Let the truly loyal and patriotic individually emulate the truly generous and *personally* forgiving spirit of him whose untimely and violent death we mourn to-day. In him no rancorous or personal hate found any place. Had he *official* duties to perform in righteously punishing infractors of the law, he was just enough to perform such duties with a firm hand, even though it was with a bleeding heart. In all this, let us follow his great and good example.

As to the present Executive, let us sustain him by our sympathies, our co-operation, our prayers, even as we sustained his illustrious predecessor, to the end that his life may be spared, that his plans may be wise, his decisions just, his success, under God, in the complete overthrow of the rebellion, and in the proper judicial punishment of leading insurgents, speedy and complete, so that in quietness and peace, we may spend all our future days.

Finally. As to the *lessons* of the hour, what shall I say. Surely they are many and weighty. We ask your attention only to a few.

1st. The first is in the language of the Psalmist: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is

the man that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God."

Our Presidents may die. They may fall by the hand of the assassin, or by other means be called away; but if our nation be just before God, then he who is "the God of nations," and "who ever lives," will see to it that our nation too, shall live even as long as the sun or moon endures.

2ndly. Let us learn the great *levelling* truth expressed by the poet when he says:

Princes, this clay must be *your* bed
In spite of all your towers;
The tall, the wise, the reverend head,
Must lie as low as ours.

No rank, no station, no honors, no worldly power, is any exemption from the common fate of humanity. The sentence, "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return," shall fall literally and certainly to the lot of each and all of us. Nor is there any *caste* in the grave. The dust of earth's greatest and noblest ones will mingle indiscriminately and indistinguishably with that of her humblest ones. And as in death, and in the grave, there is no distinction, neither will there be at the bar of God. There the ruler will be judged, and judged by the same standards as the ruled. There earth's greatest and fairest, most flattered and favored ones will be judged upon precisely the same principles, and with the same rigor with those who, among men, are least favored. Earthly distinctions are forever done away, both at the bar of God, and in the eternal world.

3rdly. Let us learn the uncertainty of life. Who can tell what a day may bring forth. How little did Mr. Lincoln think a week ago that to-day—upon this 19th day of April—his body would be lifeless in its coffin, and that his spirit would already have been assigned by his Judge to its eternal destination. Well may we say,

"Great God, on what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things;
The eternal state of all the dead
Upon life's feeble strings."

Death may come in any one of a thousand forms—

“Dangers stand thick through all the ground
To push us to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around
To hurry mortals home.”

And let us not forget that

“Infinite joy or endless woe
Attends on every breath.”

An hour from this, and some of us, either by the assassin's dagger, or by Providential visitation, may be fixed in our eternal home. How awful a thing it is to live, but especially to die, unprepared.

As for Mr. Lincoln, I am sorry he met his fate in a theatre. Theatre-going was, perhaps, his worst practice. But, though such practice, under all ordinary circumstances, is to be condemned as wrong, yet he may have considered its occasional use as a necessary relaxation from the onerous pressure of official duties upon his over-taxed brain. Upon this occasion too, at least, he seems to have gone, according to his own words, more to please others than himself. He was, however, proverbially, and we may add, most emphatically, *an honest man*. He was also, as I am informed, a regular, careful, and devout reader of the Word of God; and a man of much and fervent prayer. It was his habit in parting from Ministers who visited him, to ask an interest in their prayers. And, we have it from one to whom he made the profession, that a little less than two years ago he gave his heart to the Saviour; and ever after claimed to be, in his own language, “a Christian.” In making such claim, a man so honest with all others, would not certainly suffer himself to be deceived. Who can doubt, therefore, that the Spirit of our lamented President is now an inhabitant of a better home above.

Our minds turn now naturally to his deeply sorrowing and sorely afflicted widow and family. Poor Mrs. Lincoln. My heart bleeds for her in her great affliction.

In common with us all, and as one of the citizens of this Nation, she has to-day the same occasion as we to mourn our

Nation's loss. But *her* loss is greater. She mourns the sudden death of a *husband* so great and good as to have justly been the Nation's idol. Raised to the very pinnacle of human society and position, by virtue of her being the wife of the Nation's President, now, by his death, she is driven rudely, so far as the assassin is concerned, from the Executive Mansion, and consigned to the neglect and loneliness of a widow's life. Her husband dead, the attentions and blandishments falling upon her, by reason of her relation to him, will cease. Verily, *she* will go mourning all her days.

I am reminded here, that Mrs. Lincoln is not the only widow made such by this ruthless war. Other widows' hearts, through all the land, are sighing to their breaking. Mrs. Lincoln loved her husband; but, did the wives of our fallen Generals, Captains and Private Soldiers love their husbands less? No, no! they too are faint with weeping; and thus, through all the land, for husbands, fathers, sons and brothers slain, a solemn and continued wail of woe goes up to God.

But, though our noble President and our honored Braves have fallen, the *Nation* lives. This flag at least, which to-day you see so deeply draped, will emerge again from these weeds—and, though in mourning now, and having been, during the last four years, so often trailed in dust by traitors' hands, yet the day is dawning, thank God, when, like the Sun, it shall rise to set in blood no more. It is, henceforth, to have sole and undisputed sway over a land redeemed, and to wave in a fairer sky and in a purer breeze—and, till the heavens be no more, over what shall hereafter be in truth, what heretofore it has only been in song, "The land of the *free*, and the home of the brave."

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a list or index, written vertically on the left side of the page. The text is dark brown or black ink on aged, yellowish paper. The script is highly stylized and difficult to decipher, but appears to be organized into several distinct vertical columns or lines. Some characters resemble 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'e', 'f', 'g', 'h', 'i', 'j', 'k', 'l', 'm', 'n', 'o', 'p', 'q', 'r', 's', 't', 'u', 'v', 'w', 'x', 'y', 'z' in a cursive form.

Rev. Edward McPherson
(Black H.R. U.S.)

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